



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

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**Testimony of Kendall Wiggin  
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Concerning Raised House Bill 5477  
"AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE-WIDE PLATFORM FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRONIC  
BOOKS"  
General Law Committee – Public Hearing  
March 11, 2014**

Good afternoon Senator Doyle, Representative Baram and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Kendall Wiggin and I am the State Librarian. I am here to speak in support of Raised House Bill 5477.

Connecticut is nationally recognized as a leader in resource sharing. For over 40 years Connecticut's libraries have shared their resources with citizens statewide. Today those services include iCONN, Connecticard and Connecticar. Several years ago the State Library started getting questions from citizen's who thought that they should be able to use the Connecticard program to borrow eBooks. As it turns out eBooks are not purchased but rather licensed and these licenses prohibited eBooks from being shared the way books can be under copyright. As the result of this committee's efforts, Special Act 13-10, "An Act Concerning a Study Regarding the Availability of Electronic Books to Users of Public Libraries" was passed by the General Assembly last year. The act called for the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, in consultation with the State Librarian and the Attorney General, to conduct a study regarding the availability of electronic books to users of public libraries in this state.

That report, issued January 31, 2014 included several recommendations including investing in a state-wide e-book distribution platform. The State Library concurs with the report's conclusion that "[t]he most forward-thinking and sustainable option the legislature could pursue to increase e-book availability at public libraries is to make a significant State-wide investment in the creation of an e-book distribution platform that could be shared by libraries in the State." Over the years, the General Assembly has given the State Library responsibility for a variety of statewide resource sharing services. Raised House Bill 5477 would provide the State Library with the authority to pursue this recommendation.

The report points out a number of advantages of a State library-owned platform. I won't go into them here, but again, the State Library concurs. We have demonstrated our ability to successfully operate statewide library services. With iCONN we have been able to leverage a \$2 million allocation into a \$32

million dollar savings for schools and libraries. I am confident that a statewide eBook platform would leverage libraries' buying power when it comes to eBooks.

This legislation is an important first step in addressing the availability of eBooks across our state, one that lays the groundwork for Connecticut to continue to be a leader in resource sharing. I should point out that implementation would mention that this would require funding that is not in the Governor's current budget.

I urge your favorable action on Raised House Bill 5477.